

# Time to plant pansies for winter, spring color

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO BY Dr. William M. Johnson

Pansies have become the most popular cool-season annual used to provide a dependable winter and early spring color display for Galveston County landscapes and gardens. Plant them in large drifts, masses or as pockets of color.

Pansies have become the most popular cool season annual used to provide a dependable winter and early spring color display for Galveston County landscapes and gardens. Their versatile use in the landscape, easy culture and abundant blooms make them quite worthy of their popularity.

Now through early December is the ideal time to be planting pansy transplants. Pansies require soil temperatures between 45 degrees and 65 degrees Fahrenheit for best growth. Pansies planted after soil temperatures drop below 45 degrees Fahrenheit show stunted, pale green leaves, little growth and little or no flowering. Cold-stressed root systems are less efficient in taking up nutrients.

On the other hand, pansies planted too early and exposed to warm temperatures often

appear yellow, the stems stretch, and the new growth will appear as small rosettes at the ends of stems. As a result, the plants flower poorly and are more susceptible to frost damage or disease.

Even though they might look delicate, pansies are tough plants as they are one of the few flowers that withstand cold temperatures (down to the single digits) and still provide a spectacular show when temperatures warm up.

Pansies thrive during our mild winters. They will continue to provide blooms through the spring season, which is their peak performance period.

Pansies should be located in areas that receive full sun or only partial shade. The soil should be well-turned to a depth of 8 to 10 inches, and the addition of organic

amendments, such as peat moss, garden compost or composted manure, is beneficial.

Pansies are susceptible to several root rot diseases and they require good soil drainage for optimal performance. Therefore, the bed level should be raised several inches above the existing ground to insure good surface drainage in areas not well-drained.

Pansies lend themselves to a wide range of applications in the home landscape. They are popular in large formal plantings, as borders and in planter boxes. They are also popular as background or fill-in annuals for spring bulbs. Their long season of bloom is excellent in providing rich, colorful blooms from the spring season to the bloom season of early summer annuals.

The pansy has one of the widest range of flower colors of any garden annual. Included in the wide color range are red, purple, blue, bronze, pink, black, yellow, white, lavender, orange, apricot and mahogany. Flowers can be single-colored, streaked or blotched.

Some flowers have petals with crinkled-ruffled edges, while others are smooth. The F1 hybrids offer an extended bloom time lasting well into spring because of their heat tolerance.



November 16, 2011



Dr. William Johnson is a horticulturist with the Galveston County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit his website at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston>.

*News column printed in the Galveston Daily News, The Post, and other Galveston County Newspapers.*



Today, you will find a wide array of pansy varieties. Different breeding companies produce entire series of pansies, with names like Majestic Giants, Antique Shades, Nature, Matrix, Panola, Skippy, and Bingo, just to name a few. Each series sports varieties with and without faces.

Choose healthy, fresh plants for planting. Most transplants are sold locally in multi-pak units or by the individual plant. Purchase stocky plants with at least four to five strong leaves.

Space individual plants 6 to 10 inches apart to provide a solid mass of color. Be sure the top of each transplant's potting mix is about 1/4-inch below the soil line. However, do not plant too deeply as the tender plants become more susceptible to root rot.

To keep pansies blooming profusely, fertilize lightly every month with a general purpose, complete fertilizer (such as 13-13-13) or a slow release fertilizer such as Osmocote. To maximize flower production, be sure to keep spent flowers pinched off.

Water the newly planted pansies well. Mulch pansy beds with shredded pine bark to provide a distinctive background contrast that enhances the green foliage and colorful flowers.

Pansies are easy to grow and will reward a homeowner's efforts with an abundance of color. There is a place for them in every Galveston County garden. Plant now and enjoy their smiling faces in your fall, winter and early spring garden.

